

**Minutes of the Special Meeting  
of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Monday, March 26, 2018  
5:35 p.m. – 7:10 p.m.  
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA**

**Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:**

**Paul Sagan**, Chair, Cambridge  
**James Morton**, Vice-Chair, Boston  
**Amanda Fernandez**, Belmont  
**Margaret McKenna**, Boston  
**Michael Moriarty**, Holyoke  
**James Peyser**, Secretary of Education  
**Hannah Trimarchi**, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Marblehead  
**Martin West**, Newton

**Jeff Wulfson**, Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

**Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:**

**Katherine Craven**, Brookline  
**Ed Doherty**, Boston  
**Mary Ann Stewart**, Lexington

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Chair Sagan called the special meeting of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to order at 5:35 p.m. The members of the Board introduced themselves. Acting Commissioner Wulfson said the Board would hear a panel presentation and engage in discussion about personalized and competency-based learning in Massachusetts and its relevance to helping close achievement, employability, and equity gaps. Acting Commissioner Wulfson introduced Cliff Chuang, Senior Associate Commissioner, who said the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has co-founded the Massachusetts Personalized Learning EdTech (MAPLE) Consortium and has joined the multi-state New England Secondary Schools Consortium (NESCO) to assist Massachusetts districts and educators in implementing personalized and competency-based learning strategies.

Mr. Chuang introduced Mr. Michael Horn, member of the Board's Digital Learning Advisory Council, who provided an overview of personalized and competency-based learning in Massachusetts. Mr. Horn explained that technology is necessary to implement personalized learning effectively, affordably, and at significant scale. He discussed the definitions of blended learning and the benefits of online and blended learning, adding that within the framework of established curriculum standards and high expectations, personalized learning motivates students to reach their goals and take ownership of their own learning. Mr. Horn concluded by explaining that effective use of technology allows teachers and students to focus more on creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration.

Ken Klau, Director of the Department's Office of Digital Learning, introduced the following panelists: Lourenco Garcia, Principal, Revere High School; Sarah McLaughlin, science teacher, Melrose Middle School; Raven Guerra, student, Boston Day and Evening Academy; and Avanti Mohan, graduate, Francis W. Parker Charter School. They discussed their perspectives on leading, teaching, and learning in schools that support personalized and competency-based learning. Principal Garcia stated that it has been rewarding for both teachers and students. He said he supports high standards for student learning and believes this approach enables students and teachers to focus on mastery and build strong relationships. Ms. McLaughlin said that despite initial challenges, the initiative has helped her students show their learning and helped her assess their proficiency.

Ms. Guerra described how competency-based learning has allowed her to learn at her own pace and identify specific areas of study she needed to focus on. She added that her experience at the school encouraged her to believe in the opportunities she will have after high school. Ms. Mohan said this approach has resulted in her becoming more engaged in her own learning and more confident about building her skills and knowledge. Vice-Chair Morton commented that both students were impressively articulate in talking about their experiences.

Following the first panel discussion, David O'Connor, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Personalized Learning Edtech (MAPLE) Consortium; David Ruff, Executive Director of Great School Partnerships; and Ann Koufman-Frederick of MAPLE and LearnLaunch Institute provided brief overviews of their work in Massachusetts. Mr. O'Connor said the MAPLE Consortium includes 39 districts in Massachusetts and described some of the personalized learning practices those districts are using. Mr. Ruff said he is pleased that Massachusetts has joined the New England Secondary School Consortium, a network for the New England states and their school districts to learn from each other.

Board members engaged in discussion with the panelists about how this initiative could address achievement and opportunity gaps, how it applies to higher education institutions, whether it could be used to expand summer learning opportunities for K-12 students, and how these initiatives relate to parents' engagement in their children's learning.

Chair Sagan thanked all the panelists and commended the students for their contribution. He said the Board looks forward to future discussions.

**On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:**

**VOTED:       that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 7:10 p.m., subject to the call of the Chair.**

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jeff Wulfson  
Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education  
and Secretary to the Board